



EXPLOITS AT ICY CREEK

At Icy Creek, within the Lane-Poole Reserve, a 10 ha clearing that once grew cabbages, lettuces and tomatoes, has been recently transformed into the Department of Conservation and Land Management's first bush camp for environmental studies. Fire-rings, tents and tables are now the order of the day.

The Icy Creek clearing was once part of a 173 ha farm set amongst the scenic surrounds of tall jarrah, blackbutt and marri forest and a dense understorey of grass trees, zamias and acacias where wildflowers such as calothamnus and grevilleas thrive. There are 500 plant species found within Lane-Poole Reserve.

The property was purchased in 1984 (for \$310 000) after the Northern Jarrah Reserves Advisory Committee recommended that conservation and nature recreation were more appropriate land uses for the area than a proposal for commercial gravel extraction.

The transformation of the property from a farm to an educational community group camp was brought about by a Community Employment Program of six months duration, involving six men and women.

The semi-primitive style site development and the surrounding 'wilderness' are unusual qualities for a school camp that provides for such a diversity of educational opportunities. The various plant communities throughout the Reserve are habitats for a diverse range of fauna that the observant and adventurous may be fortunate to encounter while at Icy Creek. Fauna listed for the Reserve at present includes 29

species of mammals, 21 reptiles and amphibians, 10 fish species and at least 78 different bird species.

A forest-canopied amphitheatre has been constructed for group meetings and performances. There is also a large open space area for recreational activities. The one building will eventually be converted to a resource centre for use by educational groups involved in field studies.

As well as providing an excellent opportunity to practice camping skills, the area is well suited for environmental awareness activities, as well as more scientific ecological studies.

The forest surrounding Icy Creek was logged 60 years ago and the area is now an ideal spot from which to consider management issues such as conservation, recreation, fire protection, dieback control, water quality in forest catchment areas, timber production and bauxite mining.

The campsite caters for a range of outdoor activities, being in proximity to the King Jarrah walktrail (a 16 km circuit), the old Nanga Mill site, Nanga Brook and two small dams on Icy Creek.

The development of additional facilities is continuing with a community shelter, another amphitheatre, an extensive walk track system and a confidence course.

Bookings for the Icy Creek Bush Camp can be made through the Dwellingup District Office, Banksiadale Road, Dwellingup, W.A. 6213. (095) 38 1078.

Landscape

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Editorial

W.A. is a vast, sparsely populated State, and it is not uncommon to hear some parts of it described as 'the last frontier'. But there are few, if any, parts of W.A. that have not been affected by European settlement.

Evidence of western civilization in some of the most remote areas is far too often the empty can. But even where there are no obvious traces, the effects have been profound.

There is compelling evidence, for example, that the displacement of Aboriginal communities from much of inland W.A. — and the subsequent removal of Aboriginal firing practices — is directly responsible for major changes in vegetation, which in turn has resulted in the virtual extinction of many native animals.

It is not always easy to pick the effects of European civilization on the natural environment even when the history is well-documented. This *Landscape's* account of the woodlands around Kalgoortie talks about the often horrific environmental damage, but an observer of these woodlands today would have difficulty recognizing that vast areas were clearfelled less than 50 years ago.

While the concept that we should 'let nature do its thing' has superficial appeal, the reality is that the purity of nature has been, and will continue to be, distorted by human presence. We have no option if we want to sustain the unique ecosystems of W.A. but to apply management principles.

The history and management problems of Benger Swamp, which feature in this edition, illustrates two fundamental points. Firstly, even the most disturbed areas of W.A. can make a major contribution to conservation. Secondly, we must be careful not to change a system that works even though the way it works may not be 'natural'.

As complex and as difficult as the task of understanding ecosystems is, the social and political factors which influence the type of management that can be applied are often more difficult to deal with.

The key to good management is an understanding of the processes that drive the ecosystem. Once we understand what the natural processes are, we can then devise management systems which will mimic them.

The only way to ensure that rational decisions are made on environmental management is to provide the facts.

COVER PHOTO

Just when you thought you had seen every angle on our State symbol, photographer Jiri Lochman surprises you with a fresh perspective.